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'n' Old CIA, Everybody's Millstone, Nobody's Patsy

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In brief is the meat of the CIA Chileario: \$11 million was shelled out to corrupt the free Chilean electoral process in order to guarantee the election of an incorruptible, democratic government. According to Gerry Ford, part of the money was spent to insure the survival of a free press and flourishing opposition parties so that Allende could be overthrown and murdered in order to install a regime that would shut down the press and jail the dissenting opposition.

Well, that's inflation for you. Why, in the old days we used to be able to destroy a Vietnamese village in order to save it for the PX price of a Zippo, a box of flints and a can of lighter fluid. No, the dollar just doesn't stretch that far any more, especially in Chile where a wheelbarrow of pesos doesn't buy a good steak dinner, much less a tidy, old-fashioned Yankee-sponsored coup.

THE CHILEAN ESCAPE has stirred up a considerable uproar; leaving some commentators to suggest that the CIA be abolished, a Gordian knot proposal with which I hasten to associate myself. All the same, it is bootless to waste any breath chastising the CIA as the culprit of this shameful affair. There is a maxim in the philosophy of logic known as Occam's razor which states that it is vain to explain the whole with more entities when fewer will

do just as well. It is therefore not the vagaries of the CIA's operations which are at issue, but those who are ultimately responsible for supporting and activating the CIA. After all, the CIA is merely a bureaucratic instrument wielded by the President and his mystical 40 Committee, and overseen by Congressional committees.

The CIA Chilean conspiracy is scarcely a flabbergasting departure from what passes for normality in American post-war national security doctrine: right wing coups in Guatemala, Iran, Greece; U-2 flights; Bay of Pigs invasions; secret wars in Laos; Watergate complicity; the manipulation of the National Student Association. These schemes, whether they backfire or not, are

fundamentally inimical to the idea of human freedom, which makes the CIA an institution repugnant to the democratic spirit that presidents and congressmen must necessarily support at least to get reelected.

NOT SURPRISINGLY then, the only honest statement to emerge from this whole Chilean fiasco was made by director William Colby, who questioned the wisdom of his agency's informing Congress of its future "delicate" activities since candor in the Chilean matter had revealed policies so outrageous that Congress had no choice but to expose them. In effect, Colby is saying that to efficiently subvert other democracies the president's 40 Committee members must either lie to the Congress, or exact a

promise that truthful testimony in executive session, however grisly its moral content may be, will not be taken amiss by a few loud-mouthed congressional hot-heads. To give Colby his due, he has a neat and unarguable point—as far as it goes.

The rub is that, on the one hand, there are perjury laws covering congressional testimony; and, on the other, there are increasingly fewer congressmen whose desire to hear the truth is strong enough to merit risking their political survival by an advance pledge of blanket support for the truth, however repellent it may be.

AS A RESULT, you have a CIA nominally controlled by a president and overseen by a congress, all of whose self-interest requires that they remain as profoundly ignorant of agency activity as possible. It's the Watergate principle of deniability all over again.

Of course, Chuck Colson doesn't want Howard Hunt to tell him what happened inside the DNC headquarters. Such information only makes Colson more liable to a perjury count when he goes before the grand jury. Of course, no president wants to know exactly what CIA projects his predecessor allegedly set in motion. If the scheme goes well, he can't take any public credit for it anyway; if, as seems more likely, it backfires, the blame can always be subtly shifted to a prior administration as with the Bay of Pigs.

Of course, Congress

doesn't want to hear how the CIA actually plans to spend its appropriations. After all, no one wants to wake up one morning to see Allende's corpse in the newspaper and have to say to himself: Oh, yeah. I remember now. That's what they wanted that \$11 million bucks for.

AND SO THE CIA goes its way, in an instrument presidents and congresses are pleased to have at their disposal, as long as the honor precludes any responsibility for controlling it. Instead, the Congress instituted a gentlemen's agreement to this effect: OK, fellows, we'll ask you what you're up to, then you fuzz it up and lie a little bit and there'll be no hard feelings. What the hell, what we don't know can't hurt us.

By and large, it was a serviceable and safe compact. But, in these parlous Watergate times, the good bureaucrat is well advised to cover his tracks with maximum prudence. So when they hauled old Colby up to the House for closed CIA hearings, he told the truth, which is said to set men free—from perjury raps among other things. And in telling the truth the whole elaborate gentlemen's agreement came apart at the seams. Because, of course, Colby's predecessors and associates had all been expected to lie. Some of them did it with suppleness, others with baldness, but all of them with slavish elan. Their president and their congress thought highly of them for it.

SO NOW THE suave Richard Helms faces the clink for lying so loyally.

Kissinger is once again accused of deception. Assorted other State Department and CIA minions can look forward to the ruination of their careers, if not convictions for perjury. With a unanimous tut-tut of horrified astonishment the Senate Foreign Relations Committee will conduct hearings on the Chilean prevarications.

Even I am disinclined to accept such an estimate of congressional obtuseness. The fact, obvi-

ous to anyone, is that Kissinger's successful foreign policy machinations—to take merely the best example—are based on his immense gift as a liar. The enormous approbation he enjoys among presidents and congresses alike resides in the facility, the sober integrity, the self-effacing wit with which he envelops one whopper after

another. His success abroad is predicated on the fact that foreigners believe him. Indeed, his lies are so credible that, even now that the rules of congressional testimony have been changed on him in midstream, the Congress and the President can look us right in the eye without blinking and say:

Gosh, he sounded so convincing, I believed him. It looks like Henry, the 40 committee and the CIA pulled the wool right over our eyes.

And mugs that we are, we'll buy it, content once more to let those with responsibility shift the blame to others.

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